



California Veterans Board

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor



Volume 2, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

This edition of the newsletter will report on the accomplishments of the past two board meetings and the activities in which our members have been involved during the past four months.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



It is my privilege to Chair the California Veterans Board and work with the five other Board members, as appointees of the Governor, to serve the State's 2.1 million veterans. Whether the veteran is aged and in need of care in one of the Veteran Homes of California or the veteran has recently returned from the areas of conflict, and is in need of educational opportunities, employment, or a loan to purchase a house, they should know that our State cares and is committed to assisting them.

The Board serves three specific functions: 1) to determine policies for the California Department of Veterans Affairs, 2) to hear and decide appeals by veterans who feel they have been denied benefits, and 3) to advocate for California veterans' rights and benefits.

You can be certain that the current members of the Board are carrying out their duties in an outstanding manner as we continue to review our policies to ensure that the Department is serving veterans' needs within the resources provided by the State and within the law. As we review appeals from veterans, we are committed to providing a fair and impartial hearing in a timely manner. And, lastly, we continue to advocate for veterans' causes and in that regard, we have had some successes. Here are a few: the passage of SB 1455 (Cogdill), Gold Star Family license plates; Proposition 12, the Veterans Bond Act of 2008, which will be on the ballot this November, and hopefully is passed so our young veterans will have an opportunity to own their home as veterans

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CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD MEMBERS

Alice Astafan
Chair

Tom Moran
Vice Chair

Jake Alarid
Member

Vernon Chong
Member

Thomas Richards
Member

Edward Olson
Member

have in the past; and the many letters written to Congress in support of the newly approved educational bill. Also, each of us continues to support, through our donations or direct participation, the various Stand Downs for homeless veterans and the fundraising efforts of VetFund, which provides support for various veteran causes.

As we approach the month of November, I take this occasion to remember all veterans – those men and women who are responsible for our being free – free to make choices at the voting booths so we can continue to have a peaceful transition from the current administration to the next one. Americans truly are blessed and I thank each veteran in California for helping to make that a reality!

Alice Astafan, Chair



Highlights Of June 13 California Veterans Board Meeting At The Chula Vista Veterans Home

The 82nd Airborne Division Honor Guard posted the Colors at the opening of the June 13 meeting at the Veterans Home of California, Chula Vista and the Star Spangled Banner was performed by Ms. Joan Hall.



- Congressman Robert Filner opened the meeting with welcoming remarks. Congressman Filner represents the 51st Congressional District and has served the people of Southern California since 1992. He is the Chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and serves on its Subcommittee on Health. Congressman Filner is a senior member on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is the Ranking Democratic Member on the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and

Maritime Transportation. He also serves on the Subcommittees on Railroads and Aviation.

- The Board was honored to have in attendance Assembly member Mary Salas, who briefly welcomed the group, Veterans Representative Wade Sanders, Lt. Governor Garamendi's Office, USDVA's Lily Fetzer, Staffers Shawn Veen, Assembly member Saldana's Office, Oriana Camacho, Assembly member Salas' Office, Kristen Aliotti, Senator Ducheney's Office, Valentino Separa, Assembly member Shirley Horton's Office, and Veteran of the Year, Bobby Price.
- Past Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services John King gave an update on federal and state efforts to address the growing number of mental health issues suffered by veterans.
- The Board voted unanimously to approve a revised version of policy C-10 Admissions [\(link\)](#)
- The Board voted unanimously to approve a revised version of policy (A-15) covering the handling of complaints received by the Board [\(link\)](#).
- Chair Astafan read and presented a resolution to past Board Member Colin Shadell in recognition of his service on the Board from May 2006 to January 2008.



Chair Astafan presents a plaque to Board member Colin Shadell

- Chula Vista Home Administrator Jane Bergman presented a plaque of appreciation to the AMVETS Support Foundation in recognition of their continued support of the Veterans Home of California, Chula Vista. Over the past 8 years, since the Veterans Home opened, they have donated more than \$500,000 in goods and services.

- Phil Landis, CEO Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD), made a presentation to the Board regarding his organization. VVSD was founded in 1981, and is the leading organization in the nation addressing the issue of homelessness in the veterans community. They developed the "Stand Down" program in 1987, with more than 100 Stand Downs held across America last year.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OCTOBER CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD MEETING IN SACRAMENTO AT THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

- The Board reviewed and updated their strategic vision, values, and goals and objectives. In upcoming meetings, they will be defining actions to measure and accomplish their plan. [\(link\)](#)
- The meeting focused on two informal appeals before the Board. The first appeal was for the denial of a CalVet Home Loan, and the second appeal was an impending eviction at the Veterans Home of California, Yountville. The Board met in closed session to deliberate and will notify the appellants of their decision by mail.
- At the request of a veteran at the Veterans Home of California, Barstow, the Board reviewed Policy C-10 regarding Admissions to ensure its legal accuracy. Upon review, the Board felt no changes were required.



THE CALVET BOARD – OUT AND ABOUT

Member Alarid attended the May Laguna Hills City Council Meeting to present past Board Member Randy Bressette with a plaque in recognition of his service on the Board from January 2006 to January 2008.

Chair Astafan attended the California National Guard Meeting with Brigadier General Kight in Gold River. Chair Astafan also attended the Academy Selection Reception hosted by Congressman Dan Lungren at McClellan Business Park.

For Memorial Day, Member Alarid represented the Governor at the City of Huntington Park's Memorial Day ceremonies and at the Los Angeles National Cemetery's Memorial Day Services.

In May, Member Richards represented the Governor at the State Highway

38 Dedication in Big Bear Lake. In June, Member Richards represented the Governor at the Vietnam War Memorial Monument Dedication Ceremony at the VA Medical Center in Fresno.

In May, Member Richards and Chair Astafan, along with Deputy Secretary Tremblay met with Assemblyman Paul Cook, and Aaron Bone, Deputy Chief of Staff for Senator Mark Wyland and Andrew Langley, Legislative Director for Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Mr. Cook, the Vice Chair of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee and the staff of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to Board members Richards and Astafan. During the meeting, both Board members mentioned and asked for the legislators to support the department's legislation, AB 3065, the civil service employment bill for veterans, SB 1455, the Gold Star Family License Plate bill, SB 1572, the Veterans Home Loan Bond Act, and SB 1675, the veterans debenture reform bill.



AUGUST HAPPENINGS

Chair Astafan spoke at the CalVet sponsored Women Veterans Conference August 8th, and represented the Governor as keynote speaker to present a proclamation at the Annual Purple Heart Veterans Day Ceremony at the State Capitol.

WHAT IS A VETERAN? *A Veteran –whether Active Duty, Retired, National Guard or Reserve is someone who, at one point in his or her life, wrote a blank check made payable to “The United States of America”, for an amount of “up to and including my life.”* Author Unknown.



The next meeting will be held on December 12 at the Yountville Veterans Home. These meetings are open to the public. The community is encouraged to attend and meet the Board and key members of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.



MISSION STATEMENT: *The California Veterans Board serves as an advocate for Veterans affairs identifying needs and working to ensure and enhance the rights and benefits of California veterans and their dependents.*